

The Seven Paths of *Torah*

In the name of the Lord our God, for your salvation I hope in the Lord.

1. (Proverbs 18:10) “The Name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe”; (Psalms 18:30) “the word of the Lord is tried, He is a shield to all those who trust in Him”: *He*, *He* and *Yod* are the causes of every cause, for this reason the prince kissed them on their head.

Man should fear them (Daniel 5:6), “his knees should knock against one another” at their presence.

The powers should turn upside down: the good heart should not sleep, but it should delight in the world to come.

He sends forth a spiral of smoke like the fire of the furnace. *Amen*. Blessed be His great Name.

(Psalms 34:3) “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together.” (Deuteronomy 32:3) “Because I will proclaim the name of the Lord, ascribe greatness to our God.” Seven are the eyes of the Name that drive the light of His *Torah*.

Man of perfect talent, approach, seek them, plunge His fear into your heart! Man of talent, open the eye of your heart to see the *Torah* of truth, whose name is “source of example”.

Write with your blood that it might be an example to you: the letter of its secret discloses Shem [in Hebrew *Shem* also means “name”], Jafet’s brother.

(Psalms 9:1) “I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart in the *Sod* (תְּוִדָּן, council, secret) of the righteous ones

and in the assembly." (Psalms 19:8-10) "The statutes of the Lord are right: they comfort the *Nefesh* (נפש, [animal/lower] soul). Truthful is the teaching of the Lord: it makes wise the simple. The decrees of the Lord are right: they cheer the heart. Clean is the command of the Lord: it gives light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure: it lasts forever. True are the judgments of the Lord: they are righteous altogether."

2. The first phase and the beginning of the work consists of assembling everyone, both the wise and the limited, to disclose to the former the purpose of the secret of *Ibbur* (עיבור, interleaving, but also pregnancy), to conceal from the latter the form of *Tibbur* (טבורה, navel), and to give to everyone according to his abilities. We need to deliver to the former the key to open its doors and to remove from the latter what he has, so that he who deserves it will have the part that is owed to him, and he will correct his own fault, so much that his measure of rectitude will testify in his favor.

In another way let the tongue of he who does not recognize the value of what he has be attached to the palate. He denied his king neither in Egypt, nor in Acre, he knelt in front of Baal, he drank from the lie.

Instead, he who is found between the two roads took the right path. To the eyes of every man it is clear that the *Torah*, which bears the name of (2 Samuel 1:18) "book of the righteous", is (Proverbs 3:18) "(it is) a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her, and happy is everyone who keeps her".

It is well known in the tradition, according to the Book of Razi'el (רזיא"ל), that [the numerical value of the word] *Me'ushar* (מעשָׁר, happy) corresponds to [that of] *Yisrael*

(ישראל). From this will originate the knowledge of all the phenomena, roads, secrets and precepts. To it must be joined desires, delights, teachings, thoughts endowed with faith, hope.

Therefore, it is opportune to let the rectors of the academies everywhere know everything that pertains to the letters and the terms that teach about the different realities — masculine and feminine, singular masculine and singular feminine, plural masculine and plural feminine — to subtly distinguish in them between what is good and what is bad, and between right and fallacious thoughts. All this is disclosed through the seven paths in which all wisdoms are contained: in the seventy sealed faces, for every language and nation.

Therefore, I will summarize such matters in this memorial letter, that it may be an admonishment for you.

3. The seven paths of *Torah* are as follows:

The first path contains the literal understanding of the *Torah* (Shabbat 63a), "Since the interpretation of a verse does not have to be alienated from the literal sense". This is the road that is suitable to the mass of the people, men, women and little children; thus it is known that every human being from the beginning of his existence, between infancy and youth, belongs to this group. Subsequently, there are people who study, and others that remain entirely without education on the path to the wisdom of the letters, but of every man is said (Job 2:12): "Even the man who was born like a young wild donkey can become wise". Therefore, it is essential that some elements of the tradition (*Kabbalah*) be transmitted to the totally illiterate, that he may become a believer thanks to the received faith, stay in his own sphere and maintain himself within the sphere of

the literal meaning. Thus, it will seem that he studied, and he will keep to what he acquired the same way as the one who has learned the literal meanings of the *Torah* keeps to them. In such a way he will be brought into submission to this first path.

The second path contains the understanding of the text according to manifold commentaries. What unites them is their revolving around the sphere of the literal meaning, which they surround from every side. Thus function the *Mishnah* and the *Talmud*, which expose the literal meaning of the *Torah*. See the matter of the “circumcision of the heart”: the *Torah* prescribes to circumcise it, as it is said (Deuteronomy 10:16): “you will circumcise the foreskin of your heart”. Taken according to the literal meaning, this precept is absolutely unattainable. Therefore, it requires an interpretation, offered by the verse (Deuteronomy 30:6), “the Lord, your God, will circumcise your heart”, which follows the statement (Deuteronomy 30:2): “And you will return to the Lord your God”. Therefore, the circumcision of the heart is properly the entrance upon the road of return to the Lord, blessed be He. The circumcision of the eighth day [the one of the flesh] instead, is something else, for it is impossible to interpret it in the sense of a repentance, as is meant by the uncircumcised of heart and the uncircumcised of prepuce. Therefore, the circumcision of the newborn has to be necessarily understood in its literal meaning, and it is of great benefit, as it has already been revealed by someone, praise to God.

The third path contains the understanding of the text under the homiletic and narrative profile, and it includes both methods previously mentioned; an example is offered by the statement of our masters of blessed memory (Genesis Rabba 4:6), “For in the second day was it not said

that it was good? [...] For the work of the waters had not been completed”, etc. . This method is called *Darash* (דָרַשׁ, homily, search), to show that by it you can investigate, inquire into, and then expound in public, in the presence of everybody. Similarly, it was called *Aggadah* (אֲגָדָה, tale) or *Haggadah* (הָגָדָה, story), that has in the first place the function of attraction; this is in fact the *Targum* (תְּرַגּוּם, interpretation), that knows how to attract hearts toward the right way; and in second place the function of speaking pleasant things that enchant the listener.

The fourth path contains the parables and the allegories, which exist in every book. It is here that one begins to separate himself from the mass of people. The mass in fact will understand those things according to one of the three methods of which we already spoke. Some will take them in a literal meaning, others will comment on them, still others will understand them through the homiletic path. Some instead will understand that they are parables, and they will fathom them. Here they will face the matters of the homonyms that the *Guide* [The Guide of the Perplexed by Maimonides] already clarified.

The fifth path is the only one that contains the Kabbalistic roads of the biblical teachings. The four methods that precede before this one are accessible to all nations: to the masses the first three, to the wise the fourth one, with or without the others. But this fifth path is the beginning of the stages of Kabbalistic wisdom, which only Israel possesses. It is here that we separate from the masses of the world, from the wise of the nations of the world and from the same wise Rabbis of Israel, who remain in the sphere of the three previously recalled methods and of the parables.

For example, along this path you catch the hint of the teaching that *Torah* gives us with her first letter, which is

the *Bet* of (Genesis 1:1) *Be-reshit* (בראשית), in the beginning), which must be bigger than the others, as the twenty-two letters that are found in each of the twenty-four books must also be. Or also with the form of the letter *Chet* of *We-charah* (וחרה, and it will ignite), which must be the following: Ω; or with the two *Nun* which are upside-down in the passage related to the verse (Numbers 10:35), “when the ark pulled up”, row in the following way: ו ו [in Numbers 10:35-36 two reversed *Nun* appear]. Many of those things were transmitted to us *Mi-bayt u-mi-chutz* (מבית ומחוץ, for inner and external tradition): full writings and defective writings, bound letters and crooked letters and so on; many are the cases. Nothing of their truthfulness was ever revealed to any people, except to our holy nation: those who follow the road of others certainly will mock, thinking that those handwritings are meaningless. Those are deceived and for the most part mistaken, but he who knows the truthfulness of those paths recognizes their superiority and clarifies their mysteries, which are holy. This method is the beginning of the general wisdom of the *Tzeruf ha-otiyot* (צירוף האותיות, combination of letters), and it is not suitable except for those who fear God and respect His Name.

The sixth path is very deep: who will find it? Of this road it is said (Job 11:9): “the measure of it is longer than the earth, and broader than the sea”. It is suitable to those about whom we spoke just above, who alone in their own will approach the holy Name, so that His work, blessed be He, may be recognizable in themselves; they are those who achieve the likeness with the action of the acting intellect (השכל הפועל) in their actions. Therefore, the name of this path includes the secret of the *Shivim leshonot* (שבעים לשונות, seventy languages), that in *Gimatreya* (גימטריא,

corresponds to *Tzeruf ha-otiyot* (צירוף האותיות, combination of letters). Such a path marks their return toward the first matter, through evocation and meditation (מחשבה) which articulate into the ten *Sefirot* (ספירות) (*Blimah*, בילמה, without determination), whose secret is holy. Everything that belongs to holiness is no less than ten: did not Moses ascend perhaps ten times, and did not the *Shekinah* (שכינה) descend as many? Was not the word perhaps created with ten dispositions, and was not the *Torah* given with ten commandments? And many other tens illustrate this concept. To this method belong *Gimatreya*, *Notariqon* (נוטריקון), permutations (חילופים), substitutions (תמורות), permutations of permutations, and permutations of permutations of permutations, which due to the scarceness of the human thought are limited to ten. However, permutations are truly unlimited, for they can be compared to the particulars of creatures, which are unlimited. Indeed, although their matter is unique, their forms change and manifest in subsequent secrets.

Through this method we confute the opinion that Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, of blessed memory, formulated in his comment to the *Torah*, concerning the name Eliezer and its *Gimatreya*, that totals 318. About him it is said (Genesis 14:14): “he armed his trained servants , born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen”. Truly it is written, “its trained man”, that corresponds to Eliezer. Although ibn Ezra stated that *Torah* does not express through *Gimatreya* – for if it would be so everybody could turn evil into good and good into the evil and – I do not believe that he was ignoring such a thing; probably he intended to hide the secret, and he was correct, right for what we said concerning the first three roads, since his whole book was written for the mass. As exceptions are passages which he

indicates, saying: "This is a mystery that he who is endowed with intellect will understand and will examine, if he is worthy of it". Without having to add that I had already the opportunity to see his comment to the *Sefer Yetzirah* (ספר יצירה), The Book of Formation) and the *Sefer ha-Shem* (ספר השם, The Book of the Name).

Here it is dealt with the glorious and fearful path, through which some of the knowledge of the ineffable name is revealed, about which is hinted in the *Sefer Yetzirah*, second chapter, where it is said that the twenty-two foundation letters are three mothers, the seven double and the twelve simple: "He engraved them, hewed them, weighed them, permuted them, combined them and with them He formed the *Nefesh* (נפש, [lower] soul) of the whole creation and the *Nefesh* of everything that is formed".

The seventh path is a particular path that contains all paths; it is the Holy of Holies, it is reserved for the prophets: it is the wheel that surrounds everything. Who understands it, understands the word that emanates from the acting intellect over the oral faculty. In fact, it is the influence that propagates from the Name, blessed be He, to the oral faculty, exactly through the acting intellect, as the master of blessed memory said in the *Guide*, book 2, chapter 36. It is the path of the truthfulness of prophecy and its essence, of the knowledge of the essence of the unique name, as much as it is possible to him who is unique among mankind, i.e. the prophet, to have understanding of it. For it represents the principle that created the divine speech in His mouth.

It is unsuitable to describe the formalities of this path, which is called the "holy and sanctified path" in a book; neither is it possible to transmit any tradition concerning it,

even in general, unless he who wishes to know it has learned from a living voice the notion of the Name of 42 letters and that of 72.

Behold, I therefore summarized to you in this presentation — that it is briefly formulated, as it is fit — the subject of the seven paths in which the whole *Torah* is included. This is enough to accomplish my aim: to start with this object this letter that I send you, honorable brother, Rabbi Avraham, who has my same name, in honor of the Lord and in honor of Avraham our father, peace be upon him.

I will now begin with rhymes and allusions concerning the ladder of *Torah*: the indentations are opposed; they are set up like the angels who ascend and descend.

Avraham, Av Raham descended;	Avraham, Av Raham ascended.
Snow's waters, the hail devastated	waters from the well, the valley impoverished.

(Those are the acronyms of the rhymes of the world to come.)

Truth has the aspect of a ladder, to praise the Rock without determination, ten <i>Sefirot</i> is their name	origin of the supernal intellects known to the circumcised hearts.
He who is intelligent beheld the ten dispositions	delivered in faith to the intellects.
They are the paths of the vocalic expression,	they are transmitted, but they ascend and descend.
They are blended, but not of the blend of the creatures,	in letters they are combined and weighed.
Their ship is full of merchandise	and their balance of sounds and blows of voice.
In their spirit every permutation is weighed,	firmaments with the foundation of humble creatures.

They are far from the lights of the luminaries,	their track is the beginning of beginnings of activity.
The sounds of the languages are bound to them,	their source springs from the source of the double life.
They change their name from maiden to wife,	they call gentlemen the servants.
Unique as the most precious gems	they have questioned them, and they emanate a sublime law,
connected and set up in chains of verses	with which to praise and to exalt the Lord of those who celebrate.
They adhere to the image of matter in the forms,	they are essences of the Name, contained in the Name.
Multitude of particulars and general things	know who is the foundation of the accidents in the forms.
Isn't perhaps the inner suit circumstances and objects	trampled without norms and without laws?
Poor me, if in the bodies of fools .	without knowledge the souls are imprisoned.
The Lord makes prophets the noble hearts,	expressions of wish, in fleeing instants.
More than anything, desiring to turn wise some fools,	so that they might fear sins and transgressions.
The engraved tables abound of allusions;	the Rock wrote them with shining letters.
In every expression there are paths of allegory;	perhaps am I not safe in the (1 Samuel 25:29) "casket of life"?
But of the people without knowledge, of the fools	the corpses are unguarded;
sweeter than honey are the idle words	according to what foreigners say,
the rules of the body are set up on their paths;	the others, the desires, don't have an order.
It appears perfect and its numbers disclose	the merit of faith and doctrines of the tradition;
the Rock chose them with four banners;	It transmitted them, so that every investigation might be performed through them.

Truth you are, names, sublime principles	tested in our heart for the praise.
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4. (Proverbs 8:6) "Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things".

(Ecclesiastes 2:3) "Then I sought in my heart" and thought out in my intellect. I knew the secret of your missive and the foundation of your thought, I understood you wanted to share with me its truthfulness and of its essence; I caught your exquisite words and your beautiful didactic discourses, that told us about your appointment and about the longing of your soul toward the higher sciences and the goal of spiritual things, which make it possible for the talent of whomever is endowed with intellect to pass from power to action.

When I understood this, I greatly rejoiced of your good nature and disposition; at once my *Nefesh* was drawn to yours, intensely, and my *Ruach* united with yours, strongly: all your words seem correct to me, you spoke very exhaustively, for as a whole they are all things that appear convincing in their truthfulness. It is only for a detail that it is opportune to report to you a serious contradiction, just because it is really you who gets in trouble: your words disprove each other. But I have good reasons to suspect that you did not ignore the contradiction inherent in your words. In fact, I got the impression that on this topic you spoke as motivated by deep bitterness.

I have only to report to you the contradiction in itself and then let you know the fundamental objection. I will do it with love and affection, as the one who wakes up a sleeper when he doesn't know the nature of the sleep and the truthfulness of the drowsiness. On the subject, I will add to the objection renewed amazement and wonder, since what

is impossible in my understanding is, according to what you say, necessary.

I will say that the contradiction is in that you leave your judgment to those who know, so that they let you testify against that eminent character whose name you have concealed, who disproved what he has not the authority to disprove. Therefore, if he confuted something he did not know about, here you disavow him on the basis of what he knows, but you are not competent about it; how could you accuse him of confuting what he did not know without first accusing yourself of confuting what you did not know? Here it is what I meant as a contradiction, that can be really called this way also because at the end you say that he is precise and competent in his matters; nevertheless, he is not on the right road. You praised your road, calling it the best one, and you pierced his.

I agree with you in the praise of your road; it is a justified and opportune praise: it is for me as the road of the inquiring wisdom, which is praiseworthy, because it is a really marvelous wisdom. But for me, as for every Kabbalist, it is a ladder that leads to a science that you belittle, the science of prophecy (Song of Salomon 6:9): "But My dove, My undefiled is one alone. She is the only one of her mother. She is the choice of her who bore her. The daughters saw her and blessed her; the queens and the concubines saw her, and they praised her". Of it only it is said (Proverbs 31:29): "Many daughters have done well, but you excel them all". There is no doubt that all wisdoms are her daughters and it is their mother — since all draw from it — and through it man easily reaches the acting intellect, through it he raises above all researchers and scholars who gave themselves death in order to reach it

(Exodus 8:18): "The magicians did so [...] but they could not".

5. Now that I have spoken about the contradiction and I have let you catch its substance and point, I will go back to the objection and tell you that it is necessary to propose it and to disprove that road of philosophy to which you are so committed; certainly you are brought there because of your background of wisdom. The matter is that you consider the wisdom of *Torah*, which is called the wisdom that leads to the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* (*שְׁלֹחַ הָקֵדֶשׁ*, spirit of holiness) — as I will explain at the proper time, with the help of the Lord — of a lower degree in comparison to philosophy. Perhaps you did not realize it and I will have to lead you to notice it, until you wake up from the sleep of forgetfulness to this truth and your heart will have become alienated from what it was bound to till this day and what you set for yourself as a final goal.

In fact, knowing your fine intellect, I know that you will shake from yourself this dull numbness of drunkenness which grips your heart, once you will have given careful attention to the clear demonstrations of my writing; therefore, in you the verse will come true (Proverbs 9:9): "Give to the wise one, and he will be still wiser; teach a just one, and he will increase in learning".

Now, after I informed you about the objection and its validity, I will explain to you what I meant when I spoke of amazement and wonder. Therefore, I will say that you boasted and gloried in what no wise man in the world will ever be able to glory in without at the same time denying the premises of the knowledge that you said you possess when you stated that you know the secret of the divine name and the vocalization of some of its letters; that you understood the breath of rest, the one of interruption and

the one of extension; that you guard the understanding and the disposition of the kingdom of the kings of the chariot.

Now it is necessary to briefly go back to the difference that exists between masters of prophetic *Kabbalah* and masters of intellectual wisdom. On the subject, I will begin saying that this is well known and clear to all those who studied the *Gemara* (*גמרא*) of the treatise of Shabbat (*שבת*, 88b), where it is written: "Rabbi Akiva said: our masters hand down that those who were offended and did not offend, who listened to their own humiliation and did not answer, did so out of love and rejoice of their own torment; about them it is written (Judges 5:31): 'But let them that love Him be like the sun when it goes forth in its might'". Always there, it is said: "Rabbi Yohanan said: what does it mean that is written (Psalms 68:12), 'The Lord gave the word; the bearers of it were a great army'? That every order which went out of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, divided into seventy languages. At the school of Rabbi Yishmael it was taught (Genesis 23:29): 'as a hammer that breaks the rock'. As a hammer breaks in so many splinters, so every word that went out of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, broke into seventy languages". Then the text continues: "Rabbi Chananel ben Papa said: What does it mean that is written (Proverbs 8:6), 'Hear; for I will speak of excellent things; and the opening of my lips shall be right things'? The words of the *Torah* are compared to a sovereign, to explain to you that he who infringes upon them is destined to death, just as he is destined to death who infringes the words of the sovereign. Another interpretation is: as sovereigns place crowns upon others, so do the words of the *Torah*. Another interpretation is: as this sovereign has the ability to give death and life, so do the words of the *Torah*. Thus said

Rava: for he who trusts in it, it is a potion of life; for he who does not trust in it, it is a potion of death. Another interpretation of 'sovereign things' is: to every word that went out of the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, two crowns were laid".

The explanation of those two passages in the Writings would become too long, if we considered the consequences implied from what the masters, blessed be their remembrance, explained concerning this topic; moreover, I have no intention of asserting homiletic or narrative comments on the subject. Although it is by now evident to every shrewd person that those passages are to be considered as an abode of the mysteries of the *Torah* and as curtains of the secret of prophecy (and that when the Kabbalist learns its contents, he recognizes the high degree of He Who pronounces them and the loftiness of He Who composes them), nevertheless I mentioned them here to raise two issues. The former is the secret of languages and the latter is the fact that the comment to the *Torah* is a potion of life for the one who knows it as it is due, as it is said (Deuteronomy 4:4): "And you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive, every one of you, this day". The attachment to the Name accompanies the eternal survival, as it is said (Deuteronomy 10:20): "you shall hold fast to Him, and swear by His name". And this is the faculty to subsist that derives from the ineffable Name, blessed be He. Thus it also issues from the words of Moses our master, peace be upon him (Deuteronomy 4:44): "And this is the law that Moses set (*סֵדֶר, Sam*)". Such a statement was interpreted according to the meaning that he deserved a potion (*סֵדֶר, Sam*) of life and not a potion of death. The prophet also says (Hosea 14:9): "For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but sinners shall fall in them".

Nevertheless, the *Torah* is also called potion of death for him who does not deserve it. Its symbol is the sun whose heat, through the primordial fire and air, heats and performs different actions according to the different bodies, although by itself the sun is neither hot nor cold, nor moderate — since it is neither composed by those, nor by other characters — but everything depends on him who receives it: in fact, it darkens the face of him who washes the cloths and whitens the cloths. Similarly, it softens the wax and hardens the egg, and so on.

Hence, the *Torah* brings death or life according to him who receives it, for it is written (*Proverbs 18:21*): “Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it shall eat the fruit of it”. And the holy language contains the seventy languages. In the already mentioned chapter of the *Talmud* it is said: “Rabbi Yonatan said: never separate yourself [...] from the words of the *Torah*, even in the time of death, as it is said (*Numbers 19:14*), ‘This is the *Torah* when a man dies in a tent’. Also in the time of death; therefore, we should deal with the *Torah*. Rabbi Shimon ben Laqish said: the words of the *Torah* become real only for he who grapples with the death for it, as it is said (*Shabbat 83b*), ‘This is the *Torah*, when a man dies in a tent’”. Do not read *Be-ohel*” (*באהל*, in a tent), but when a man dies *Bah* (*בה*, in it).

Behold, the two cases I alleged contain a demonstration of what I mean: they belong to the sayings of our sages of blessed memory, who, concerning the above mentioned biblical passages, teach about very perfect matters, for man needs to know their truthfulness if he desires to be perfect in his own perfection; moreover, the final perfection is not of man, nor of any human being. They also inform us concerning the essence of prophecy, about its truthfulness

and the cause of its nature, which is the word that reaches the prophets from the Lord through the perfect language that includes within the seventy languages. It is the holy language, only it, that is subsumed under the twenty-two letters of holiness, a matter for which every convinced Kabbalist has really clear demonstrations, of which he knows the premises and the developments. That is exactly what the first of the two verses teaches with its comments and its mysteries.

The second passage, instead, informs us concerning the secret of the essence of the inner human word, its faculties and the effects over the intellectual *Nefesh*. It is in fact a cause of life and, by separating itself from the body, a cause of death. Secondarily, the passage reveals that the inner word is separated into two parts, i.e. into two separate thoughts that derive from two opposite attitudes; created and sealed on two lower vessels, located at the right and at the left. Their vapors ascend up to the top and descend down to the bottom. A higher vessel receives their energy and bears children called “pupils”; a lower vessel also receives their energy and produces children, keepers of the bodily gender. The former are therefore the keepers of the spiritual gender, and two courts watch over them: the higher and the lower courts of justice. The judge sits down over the two seats of justice and judges both the higher ones and the lower ones with two attributes that are called, respectively, the attribute of rigor and that of mercy. Their name thus conveyed is even more clear: the side of merit and that of intransigence.

Behold, according to the secret of the *Torah* — the mystery of knowledge and the secret of prophecy — two trees testify of all this. They denote the beginning and the end of the *Torah*, the beginning and the end of reality, and

they are called the tree of life and the tree of death, of good and evil. The first tree reveals truth and falsehood, and it lets you know the difference between the two; it announces that all of the existing reality is truth, while falsehood is absence of reality. It gives to him who is fed with it eternal life, which then is the authentic existence, for its cause persists for ever.

But how many adversities are there along this path, before such knowledge passes from power to true, complete, existing action? How many have died believing they were alive when instead they were dead? The cause of this is the separation from the hidden character of an authentic knowledge of the essence of the tree of life and of that of knowledge. They are the beginning of reality of man, in this world and in the world to come. The one who knows their secret and knows the relation that unites them to man is the unified man who knows by them the unified name.

By now, we know that it is impossible to know them if not through *Kabbalah*, since the whole *Torah* contains all roads. But of them, the most elevated, the most exclusive among all wisdoms, is not the primary *Kabbalah*, but the intellectual *Kabbalah* (*המשכלה*, *Ha-maskelet*), which leads to the knowledge of the final goal, unknown to every nation, and revealed only to Israel, which is an unique nation, whose language and writing are unique, exclusive in the knowledge of the Name.

This is the *Kabbalah* of which it is expressly spoken at the beginning of the tractate *Avot* (*Avot* 1:1): "Moses received *קבלה*, *Kibbel* the *Torah* from Sinai and transmitted it to Joshua...". In this passage, it is not in fact stated that the notion of the *Torah*, achieved by Moses and by his pupils, was of an intellectual order, or that they reached it thanks

to their perfection in the natural human knowledge. For this reason it is not said, Moses "understood" the *Torah* from Sinai.

If then we find "from Sinai" and not "on Sinai", this is to point out the truthfulness of the secret to which the masters allude when they say that the ladder that Jacob our father saw was Sinai. This secret is revealed through *Gimatreya*, which is the method to which they refer, stating that (*Avot* 3:18) "astronomy and *Gimatreya* are the edges of wisdom".

We know that the secret of Sinai is twofold: the word equals one-hundred-thirty, a number that equals the two names of holiness [i.e., אֱלֹהִים = 65]. The same numeric value also results from the five unique names, for each of them equals twenty-six [the five possible vocalizations of the *Tetragrammaton* have as basic numerical value twenty-six]. Five pronunciations, five vocalizations, which refer to the five essences of the right and the five of the left, which are the ten *Sefirot Blimah* (בליימה, without determination), ten as the fingers, five against five. For this reason the Name [*יהוה*, *Ihvh*] begins with *Yod*, which equals ten; and the three following letters, i.e. *He*, *Waw*, *He*, equal five and five, with a six in the middle; *Waw*, to connect the second *He*, and to divide the essences between the two *Hes*, five in front of five: they act as the image of the fingers of the two hands. It is furthermore well known that the attribute of the two hands is to point out the nature of the attribute of rigor, while the ten fingers of the feet are to point out the attribute of mercy: the hands are action and the feet are movement; the language bears disciples and the circumcision (מִילָה, *Milah*, circumcision, but also word) bears children. The

total is twenty-two, to which the four causes of every action are added.

If it were not for *Kabbalah*, how would we know all this in its truthfulness? Know furthermore that the name Adonay (אָדוֹןִי) is stamped on the strength of the sun and moon when they join together: five-hundred-thirty-two and five-hundred-thirty-two, which is gotten by multiplying nineteen [lunar] years for twenty-eight [solar] years. Thus said the prophet about it (Isaiah 44:18): “for He has shut (כִּי יְהִי קַיֵּם, *Ki tach*) their eyes so that they cannot see; and their hearts so that they cannot understand”.

The world is marked with the secret. (Genesis 1:4 and elsewhere) “And God saw that it was good (כִּי טוֹב, *Ki tov* = 47)”, for He gave the strength of this to that and of that to this, He combined them the one with the other, He bound them the one to the other. A unique crown was also bound on the head of each of them, and from the side of this crown, which separates it from the other, everyone of them has its own specific quality. Such a quality is its authentic patrimony, and for each one it separates the unique from the unique, and everything that does not come true in its similar comes true in it. The sun is neither a gender nor even the sample of a gender, and so also the moon; hence they are unique and they produce unique phenomena when compared to the remaining phenomena of the stars, both of the mobile ones and of the fixed ones. Our masters called them “two kings”, an expression that appears when it is said that the moon spoke bad about the sun: “Two kings cannot serve a single crown”.

Of this is made up the mystery of *Ibbur* to which our masters of blessed memory allude, through the mouth of Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Yehoshua, concerning the solar cycle that begins from the month of *Nisan* and the lunar

cycle that begins from the month of *Tishri*: the former begins in Aries and the latter in Libra.

The holy name is divided in two in its seal. I will only briefly hint at it: you will see an angle of it and not anymore, surely not everything. Therefore, the numerical value of the letters that make up the first half of the Name, elevated to the square, equals two-hundred-twenty-five [*יה*, *Yah* = 15; the square of 15 is 225], while the value of the second part equals one-hundred-twenty-one [*וה*, *Weh* = 11; the square of 11 is 121]. Those numbers represent the mystery of the sign of Libra [מזל מזנים, *Mazal Moznayim*, the destiny of Libra = 225] and of that of Aries [מזל טלה, *Mazal taleh*, the destiny of Aries = 121]. They are two witnesses who rotate according to the Name, and they always rotate along a same line, along which the day is also equal to the night and the night is equal to the day.

They are faithful witnesses of this. The constellations are the divisions of the universe; the names the divisions of the *Nefesh*; the days and the nights the divisions of the year. Three are the truthful witnesses of the reality of the Name, blessed be He, and of its particular watchfulness upon them: the universe, the year and the *Nefesh*, already mentioned in the Book of Formation, which contains the wisdom of the Work of creation, (*מעשה בראשית*, *Maaseh bereshit*) according to its revelations and the wisdom of the Work of the Chariot (*מעשה ה' מרכבת ה'*, *Maaseh merkavah*) according to its mysteries; witness about it is the first word with which its author began, “With thirty... (*בששים*, *Bi-sheloshim*)”, which in *Gimatreya* corresponds to “Work of the Chariot”. For us it consists in a composition of the different Names. Also Ezekiel begins, according to the secret language, with an allusion to the

calculated time, when he says (Ezekiel 1:1): "In the thirtieth year".

It is well known that, as the *Torah* is interpreted according to thirteen rules, the *Aggadah* is interpreted according to thirty-two paths, among which are included *Gimatreya* and *Notariqon*, which was called "Language of *Notariqon*. Through them marvelous explanations were given in many places, and their topics alternate in the secret and in the gender.

Some remark is made about them in *Gemara* during *Shabbat*, in the chapter titled (*Shabbah* 105a) "He who builds": "Rabbi Yohanan said in the name of Rabbi Yose ben Zimra: whence does it stem that *Notariqon* is recognized by the *Torah*? For it is said (Genesis 17:4), 'because father (אָב, *Av*) of a multitude (הָמוֹן, *Hamon*) of people I made you', i.e. I made you father (אָב, *Av*) of a multitude (הָמוֹן, *Hamon*) of nations, I made you the chosen one (בָּחוּר, *Bachur*) among the nations, I made you the beloved one (חַבִּיב, *Chaviv*) among the nations, I made you king (מֶלֶךְ, *Melek*), I made you the faithful one (נָאמֵן, *Ne'eman*) among the nations [applying *Notariqon*, we take here the consonants of certain words, in this case אָב חַמּוֹן; they are then used as initials of new words]. Rabbi Yohanan said in his name: *Anoki* (אָנֹכִי, *Anokhi*) [is *Notariqon* of] 'I, אָנָא, *Ana*) myself (נַפְשִׁי, *Nafshi*) the Writing (קְتִיבָת, *Ketivah*) [I] have laid (יְהָבִית, *Yehavit*)". Our masters interpreted "a pleasant word אֲמִירָה נָעִימָה, *Amira Ne'imah*), a writing, a gift (יְהִיבָה, *Ketivah Yehivah*)", and there is also he who says אָנְכִי [read contrariwise, or יְכִנָּא]: "The Writings were given (יְהִיבָא, *Yehivah Ketivah*); truthful are their words (נָאמְנִין, *Ne'emanim Amareha*)". At the school of Rabbi

Natan, they claimed that (Numbers 22:32) "Because your way is perverse (טָרַח, *Yarach* before Me" must be interpreted: "She feared (רָאַתָּה, *Ra'atah*), she saw (רָאַתָּה, *Ra'atah*), she strayed (נָטַתָּה, *Natethah*)". At the school of Rabbi Yishmael (Levitcus 23:14) "green ears כְּרֶם לְ, *Karmel*" must be interpreted as "round, full (מֶלֶא, *Kar male*)". Rabbi Acha bar Ya'akov said that (1 King 2:8) "he cursed me with a grievous curse (נִמְרָצֶת, *Nimretzet*)" is for: "He is adulterous (נוֹאָף, *No'af*, Moabite מוֹאָבִי, *Mo'av*), murderer (רוֹצֵחַ, *Rotzeach*), oppressor צָוָרֵר, *Tzorer*), an abomination (תוֹעֲבָה, *To'evah*) [the acrostic is נִמְרָצֶת קָנְזָת, *Nimretzet Kitzatz*]". Rabbi Nahman bar Yitzchaq said (Genesis 44:16): "What will we say [...] how will we justify נְבּוּנִים קָנְזָת, *Nitzadak*)?". "We are honest (נְבּוּנִים, *Nekonim*), we are right (צָדִיקִים, *Tzaddiqim*), we are pure (טְהֻוּרִים, *Tehorim*), we are subdued (דְּקִים, *Dakkim*), we are holy (קְדוּשִׁים, *Kedoshim*)".

Under those things are concealed (Job 37:16) "the wonderful works of Him Who is perfect in knowledge". I have no intention of disclosing here their mysteries and of announcing to everybody what the wise think about those and other matters as these, about the authentic truth and the intention of our masters, according to what was handed down to them by all prophets, peace be upon them.

Nevertheless, it is my desire to let you know that they are all extraneous matters to those who claim to be wise and philosophize and strut about the works of the nations; they mistake, inadvertently or intentionally, those among us who think that our wise masters of blessed memory and the prophets, peace be upon them, were unaware of what the wise people of the nations reached, as a whole in their sciences. If those who mistake would know something of

the truth of the authentic tradition, they would know the big difference that divides our wise people from the wise people of the other nations, and to a greater extent this thing is applicable to the prophets. I claim that the greatest among the philosophers of the nations, the prince of philosophers, Aristotle, knew much less than what the most modest of our wise people strives to learn, blessed be his memory. Certainly, he was much wiser than the other wise people of the nations. He deserved praise for his quest as it stems from his writings, all the more for his intention in the quest of the sciences was aimed in the name of heaven, but he was too short of mind, as anyway everybody else. For this reason *Kabbalah*, in those fields, lets the hidden go out in the open, from potential to action; it reveals its mysteries to every Kabbalist, obviously to each one according to his capacities, to the notions he received and to his effort in bringing into action what is in potential.

Although the tradition is accessible in general to every man endowed with intelligence, not everyone who listens and receives can always bring it into action, since only the general notions are transmitted to him who is wise and able to understand. It was already said that the secrets of the *Torah* (Chagigah 13a) “can be taught only to him who is at the head of a court of judgment and quivers anxiously in his heart”, and it is moreover said that they are not transmitted except to (Isaiah 3:3) “the adviser, and the skilled worker, and the expert charmer”. So at least it was pointed out by the author of the *Guide of the Perplexed* — he who is guide of justice, holy Rabbi, man of God, Moses servant of the Lord — concerning the fourth of the five causes, at the thirty-fourth chapter of the first part of the *Guide*. Here it is about the causes that prevent one from beginning the study of the divine science.

Therefore, when you will have awakened to the understanding of what is said in the chapter titled “He who builds”, in the aforementioned tractate, you will be amazed at what is said, if you understand it correctly. Our masters of blessed memory say this way: “Rabbi Chisda said: the letter *Mem* and the letter *Samek* on the tablets of the law stood for a miracle. Rabbi Chisda said also: the writing on the tablets could be read both from the inside and the outside; *Navuv* (נָבֹעַ, empty) [should be read] *Buvan* (בֻּוְׁבָן); *Be-har* (בְּהָרָה, in the mountain) [should be read] *Rahav* (רָהָב); *Saru* (סָרוּ, they went away) [should be read] *Waras* (וָרָס)". And they continue on the subject with a well known homiletic exposure of the meaning of *Alef bet* (אֱלֹפֶת, alphabet) as *Alef binah* (אֱלֹפֶת בִּינָה, learn the intelligence). In the same passage they stated: “What is the meaning of the verse (Proverbs 3:34) ‘He scorns the scorners; but He gives grace to the lowly’? It shows that to him who goes to the impurity the door is open, while the one who goes to the purification is helped. *Shin* shows the lie (*Sheker*), *Taw* the truth (*Emet*)”.

Behold, if you remove the beginning of the name of the former word and the end of the latter, what remains is *Miqra* (מִקְרָא, Bible). Try also to understand what is said in the same place concerning the *Atbash* (אֲתָבַשׁ) [in *Atbash* the first letter is replaced with the last one, the second one with the second last one, etc.], the *Achas beta* (אֲחָס בֵּטָע) [*Achas beta* combines the first letter with the eight and fifteenth one, the second letter with the ninth and sixteenth one, etc.], the *Albam* (אֲלְבָם) [in *Albam* the first letter is replaced with the twelfth one, the second with the thirteenth one, etc.], until the last one of these examples, that is *Taryeshkat* (תָּרֵישֶׁקָת) [in *Taryeshkat* the ninth letter is replaced with the twentieth one, the tenth one

with the twenty-first one, etc.], an expression that means "wait! I have to give you whole groups of the offspring of Esau". Assess carefully those things, even if they might seem as expressions fit for schoolboys, as it is stated in the *Talmud* (Shabbat 104a): "Some little boys came and said things that were not said even at the time of Joshua son of Nun [in the text it is written: טר יש כת נטור, יש לי כתות; nevertheless in the *Talmud* it is written *Shel aovde kokavim*, of worshippers of stars, instead of *Mi-zarao shel Esaw*, the verse is part of a discussion between God and Satan]. Take then a look in the tractate of *Sanhedrin* and behold what is quoted therein concerning (Daniel 5:8) "the extremity of the hand that wrote" in the book of Daniel, concerning the possible combinations among the letters that comprise the sentence (Daniel 5:25) "מְנֻאָה מְנֻאָה תְּקֵל וְפָרַסִּין" (מןא מנא תקל ופרשין), according to the opinion of Rabbi Shemue'l and Rabbi Yohanan. The former states that we have to interpret "אָנוּמָן אָנוּמָן לְקֹת נִסְרָפוֹ", while the latter says "נָמָא נָמָא קְתַל פּוֹרָסִין". A third one states that it was "מְמַתּוֹסָנְקָפִי קְתַל פּוֹרָסִין". All three.

Truly, it is a great secret, as it is said (Sanhedrin 22a): "The passage was written according to *Gimatriya*: יְתִיבָתָה אֲדָכָפָוָג חַמְבָט". It is about a particular kabbalistic secret that is made up of the combination of *Atbash*. In the sentence at issue, there are fifteen letters of which it is said (Daniel 5:8): "But they could not read the writing". Their number is hinted at by the word *Yada* (יְדָא, hand = 15), while the number of letters which appear in the biblical interpretation of the obscure sentence is, beginning from the last one and going up backwards, twenty-eight, twenty-six and twenty-two [in the Aramaic explanation, Daniel 5:28 is composed by twenty-eight

letters, Daniel 5:27 by twenty-six, Daniel 5:26 by twenty-two letters]. If we sum up those values to the number of the letters that comprise the sentence, we get the equivalent of *Mene* (מןא = 91). The secret of the reverse grouping of the letters is *Amen, amen* (אמ"ן אם"ן), that is the end of the verse, as it stems from the allusion found in the explanation of *Mene* (Daniel 5:26): "God has numbered your kingdom and finished it". Daniel did not explain the two recurrences of *Mene*, but only the first one. Thus, the word (ibid.) *Tekila* (תקילת, you were weighed) illustrates *Tekel* (תקל) and the word (ibid.) *Perista* (פריסטת, it was separated) illustrates *Parsin* (פרשיין). It is about derivations and assonances among words.

6. In conclusion, those texts taught us that the Writing demands two primary considerations: things that even the lower class person knows. The former is the textual knowledge, i.e. the simple reading, the latter is the interpretative knowledge: it is like the dream, that needs an explanation in itself and for itself, for every dream that is not interpreted is like a parable, a written and undecoded allegory. Both dreams and parables exist in fact just to be explained and interpreted. So also names, when they recur and are found written without knowing their interpretation, seem what we spoke about before, i.e. those things that are in power and not in action. Their reality is instead finalized in the action, being the power of nothing else than an intention.

Thus, the *Nefesh* of every intelligent person is intellect in power, since in it there exists the potentiality to understand the intelligible things in action, but as long as it has not understood them it is still in potential. But it sets itself into action with great efforts, it arises with much study, little by little it strengthens and draws near to the action, until it

understands the word that originates from the acting intellect in action. It is then that we say “the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* watches over him” and “he talks with *Ruach ha-Kodesh*”. Therefore, every intelligent person has to strive to study and to apply himself to the intelligible and kabbalistic notions of the *Torah*, which remain hidden to the common people, aiming to reach the actual knowledge, i.e. in action.

We found that our masters, blessed be their memory, said at the *Gemara* of *Shabbat*, in the chapter titled “A great principle” (*Shabbat* 75a): “Rabbi Shimeon ben Pazzi said that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Lewi said in the name of Bar Qappara: of him who knows how to calculate the times and the constellations, but he does not do it, it is said (*Isaiah* 5:12), ‘but they do not regard the work of the Lord. Yea, they do not see the work of His hands’. Rabbi Shemuel bar Nachmani said, in name of Rabbi Yochanan: whence does it stem the precept to calculate the times and the constellations? From what is said (*Deuteronomy* 4:6): ‘And you shall keep and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations [...] and they will say: surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’. What is therefore this wisdom and intelligence in the eyes of the peoples? The calculation of the times and of the constellations”.

7. After recalling all those matters, I will now go back to speak of the demonstrations and of the incontestable proofs that I have concerning the fact that the road of *Gimatreya* — and all that derives from it by the combination of letters and their permutations and the permutations of the permutations — is more important and of a higher degree compared to all the roads of logic, of which it is said (*Berakot* 28b) “keep your children far from

logic”; this even if someone noticed that it is not said “keep yourself far”, but “keep your children far”, in the fear that children, students with a weak mind, could find themselves in contradiction with the power of the intelligible things concerning the kabbalistic truths of the *Torah* and create catastrophes, for (*Tosefta Avodah Zarah* 1:19) “The construction of young people is destructive and the destruction of old men is constructive”. Our masters of blessed memory already said it, “the older wise scholars grow and the more wisdom will be in them”, as it is said (*Shabbat* 152a): “(*Job* 12:12) ‘With the aged is wisdom, and understanding in length of days’; with the ignorant persons, instead, the older they grow, the more they will become stupid, as it is said (*Job* 12:20): ‘He removes the speech of the men of trust, and takes away the understanding of the aged’”. It is also said (*Avot* 1:13): “Whoever does not increase his knowledge is finished, whoever does not study is worthy of death”. It is not specified what kind of study is intended, simply because every kind of study sharpens the brain. Of him who neglects the study, it is customary to say, “one day you will abandon me, two [days] I will do it”.

8. It is really true that the systematic study deserves the good success of every undertaking. The Rabbi of blessed memory already said it at the end of the first four chapters of the Book of Knowledge [the first section of *Mishneh Torah*], that we must not go around in the garden (סֶלָע, *Pardes*, garden, also Heaven) if we did not fill our haversack with bread and meat; that is, the knowledge of what is forbidden and of what is allowed. Therefore, we need to proceed this way, and when we have gained strength we can be raised toward what is closer to the knowledge of their nature and to the nature of their cause, and from there stage by stage, until we reach the final aim

expected with the creation of man in the image and likeness of God.

And behold, Avraham is a prophet in the image of God, for (Genesis 9:6) "He made man in the image of God".

9. Now I will say about this logic upon which Aristotle composed his eight books — Categories, About the interpretation, First and second analytical tomes, Sophistical lists, Rhetoric, Topics, Poetics — that we already examined with attention. It is an art and not a wisdom, so that it is called "art of logic", and it is claimed that it has the same function to the mind that the grammatical art has to language. To a greater extent it therefore follows that the road to a knowledge of the combination of letters is higher and its truthfulness becomes even clearer with the commentaries on the Book of the Formation, known in *Kabbalah*.

I studied twelve of them, one better than the other, some of philosophical trend and others of prophetic trend. And I did this after I studied a little the books of Aristotle concerning physics and metaphysics, while mathematics I studied very little, for I did not find any translations in our language; that is the holy language, the only one, outside of which there is no other holy language, but only profane languages, blessed be he who separates the sacred from the profane. I also studied widely and many times the Guide of the Perplexed, until I understood how one thing connects to the other, overlapping the various chapters. To demonstrate that this combinatory wisdom, with its art of meditation, is higher than the art of logic, there is the fact that it is the science of the inner and supernal logic, so that the latter is at the surface of the former. What is external and lower is above what stays inside. Therefore, the art of logic comprises the singular propositions and the general

ones, the two types of contradiction, the contrary sub-contrary propositions. Some of those propositions are split between true and false in an absolute sense, others can be true or false, or both. There are four distinctive types: universal affirmative, particular affirmative, general negative and particular negative; there are twenty-three types of syllogism, of which fourteen accomplished, i.e. which may generate real consequences, and which constitute the regular procedures for distinguishing, observing, and drawing an intelligible demonstration conformable to human thought. Similarly, the premises of *Kabbalah* are ordered for known images, until, through the constant work of the thought of the combination, that is the rotation of the letters forward and backward, the truth and the falsehood that are found in potential in the *Nefesh* are divided. This at first conceives thoughts and creates images and figures of the presence as such, of the absence as such, of the presence in comparison to the absence and of the absence in comparison to the presence. At the end of such process, if the *Nefesh* is worthy, through the strength of its own thought and following the tradition, keeping itself far from impurities and from the images, it comes to rejoice and to enjoy what it found under the barks of word and number, which in the Book of Formation are called "the story, the story-teller and the book", and which originate from the *Sefirot* that bear life to the higher *Neshamot* and feed them so much that they delight in the splendor of the *Shekinah* and are crowned with a diadem of perennial joy, as it is said (Isaiah 35:10): "And everlasting joy crowning their head".

Blessed be the eye that saw all this, for when our ear hears our *Nefesh* languishes about this. Therefore, we do not need to blame the man who ignores the road of his neighbor, for he follows his own until he has tried and

evaluated which one of the roads is indeed the best one and which one is the adverse one. (Proverbs 13:16) "Every wise one deals with knowledge", and then it is also written (Proverbs 14:15): "The simple believes every word, but the wise man watches his step". Therefore, to the simple is attributed credulity, to the wise the ability to understand. This is the meaning of "his steps", i.e. the understanding of the thing.

If I, or somebody else of those who are proud of the kabbalistic traditions, would state that they do not elevate up to the degrees of the intellect, here we would be proud of something that would clearly prove less elevated than something else. Instead, the intelligible principles from which are drawn the premises of the correct syllogisms, and from which derive and on which are built and based the demonstrations, are of higher degree compared to the traditional truths, because these intelligible principles are connate in ourselves and are an ascertained truth from the beginning of the thought for those people who own all the natural faculties. The traditions, instead, are partly truth and partly falsehood, and we can find in them both good and evil. Concerning truth and falsehood, they are similar to the intelligible things and to the perceptions, for they distinguish true from false if they are taken within their limits, and if they do not depart from their bounds nor exchange their potentialities for excess or for defect they should rather preserve their balance, rigor and judgment that were transmitted to them because of nature. Concerning good and evil, i.e. concerning what is reprehensible and what is praiseworthy, traditions relate to opinions, which in many cases are accepted by some nations but ignored by others. Only rarely do all welcome their reasons and reject their adverse opinions.

Indeed, every Kabbalist is proud that the road of *Kabbalah* is above every other method of seeking the truth in every reality, to proceed in an easy, precious, cheerful, delighting and strengthening way for the *Nefesh*, bringing it closer to the understanding of the acting intellect, thing that really only the kabbalistic science can accomplish, for it is unique and different from every other tradition. Its premises are all intelligible principles that stem from individual perceptions which lead to general intellectual principles. For this reason I will say something about it, to benefit those who apply themselves to perfect it. Behold (Proverbs 3:18), "She is a tree of life to those who lay hold upon her; and happy is everyone who keeps her".

10. It is well known that the philosophers claim that while language, writing, and hidden thoughts of faith are manifold and various, the notions which abide in the *Nefesh* of every man are the same ones for everybody because of nature. Aristotle already spoke about it at the beginning of his *Armonius*, which is the book of interpretation for which we have the commentary of Ibn Rushd [Averroë] translated into our language by the wise Rabbi Ya'aqov author of the *Malmad* [Ya'aqov ben Abba Mari Anatoli, author of *Malmad ha-talmidim*, the Sting of Students], blessed be his memory.

In that place he speaks of it this way: the terms which are employed in the speech show firstly the notions contained in the *Nefesh*, and the written letters show firstly those terms; and as the written letters, the writing, are not equal for all peoples, so also the terms which refer to them are not equal by all peoples; therefore, they have a conventional meaning, not connate, while the notions that reside in the *Nefesh* are identical and equal for everybody,

as the concepts that make understandable and hint at such notions in the *Nefesh*.

He also said that the terms relate to the intelligible notions, considering that, as one thing can be welcomed intellectually without establishing if it is true or false, so a term can be understood without establishing if it is true or false. And as is it possible that what is understood of something is defined as true or false, so what is inferred from the term can be true or false. Truth or falsehood define the intelligible notions and the words that represent them, when some of them are composed or divided, but if they are completely isolated they show neither truth nor falsehood anymore.

It is clear then that according to him all languages are conventional and not natural, as also the Rabbi in the *Guide* recalled, alleging its demonstration from (Genesis 2:20): "And Adam gave names".

Here however the Name chose us, our language, and our writing, and it taught us beliefs and traditions that it chose compared to what is found by the other ones (we already spoke about it), just as in nature certain things among other ones were chosen, as reality reveals.

There is nothing to say about this option: only the prophets can do it, for they are perfect in the presence of the Lord, more than every other wise person, and they were chosen by the Lord to be His only heralds and messengers to show the truthfulness of faith. It is something indisputable. Their words are in the holy language and their writing in the holy letters, and this because it denotes the seventy languages according to the combination of letters.

11. About our letters, we know, there are individuals, genders, and types. "Individuals" are perceived and accessible to the eye that sees, for they are composed of matter and form, when in short they are written. Their place is metaphorically the table on which they are engraved, their matter is the ink, the form of every letter is its figure and every letter incurs in accidents both concerning the matter and concerning the form; the agent is the scribe who writes them by drawing them on the table, it is he who gives the form to the matter, the "ink", which is the primary matter for everyone, the closest one. Every matter is unique while the forms vary, and the matter is ready to welcome every form. The quill is instead the intermediary tool between the agent and the acted upon, and through it the form of the letters will be more or less correct, according to the possibilities of the agent, to the disposition of the table, to the quality of the matter and of the quill. The ink matter itself is also composed by many matters, but it becomes the matter of the letters: it is black as for the appearance, although it can take many aspects; it is black for the table is white, and this one is in order to let its contrary stand out, i.e. the black.

What happens to the ink is exactly what happens to the seminal emission that contains the human form, which is the matter of every man. We will speak only about this, leaving aside all the other living beings, for this is not the place to explain what man has in common or how he is different compared to the others living beings.

About the blood of man it is said (Deuteronomy 12:23), "the blood is the *Nefesh*", and also (Leviticus 17:11) "for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the *Nefesh*". *Nefesh* and blood are therefore synonyms. This blood is firstly female, of red aspect and color, although it can

change its color as it changes its nature. It represents half of the matter of man. The other half of the blood is male and it is of white color. Both of them are “menstrual bloods” (*דְמֵי נִדּוֹת*, *Dame niddot*), i.e. that blood (Genesis 4:12) “which is fugitive (*נִדִּים*, *Nadim*)” [there is a similitude between the words *נִדָּה*, *Niddah*, menstruated woman, and *נִדָּד*, *Nadad*, to wander] from its place in order to receive new forms and natural genders. It springs out, spreads out and intermingles, continuing to effuse itself. When the male and female blood unite, they are sealed with the name *EI Shaddai* (*אֱלֹהֶיךָ שָׁדָי*, God Almighty). The secret of the name *EI* (*אֱלֹהֶיךָ*, God), is that the letters that make it up are the initials of *Alef* and *Lamed*, which are the two unique names of the letters of *EI*. The secret of every *Peh* is that its numerical value equals to that of the word *Molad* (*מוֹלָד*, birth, but also new moon) and also to that one of the different combination, *Limmud* (*לִמּוֹד*, study). Every birth has its own blood. Then behold, *Peh* and *Lamed* are numerically equal to *Mem*, *Mem* and *Lamed*. If we remove *Peh* and *Lamed* from the names of *Alef* and *Lamed*, we get the word *Adam* (*אָדָם*, man). If we unite *Adam* to *Mem*, *Mem* and *Lamed*, we finally get *Adam memallel* (*אָדָם מַמְלָל*, man that murmured). The numerical value of the word *EI* corresponds to *Hahawayah* (*הַהֲוֵי*, existence). If from the names of the letters that make up *EI* — *Alef*, *Lamed*, *Peh* and *Lamed*, *Mem*, *Dalet* — we remove the initials, *Peh*, *Lamed* and *Mem*, *Dalet* are left, which have the same numerical value of *Ha-hesed* (*הַחֲסֵד*, destruction). It is a great secret method that will not rightly be understood by the uninitiated.

The secret of *Shadday* (*שָׁדָי*, Almighty) is that it has the same numerical value of Metatron (*מַטְתָּרוֹן* = 314). If we remove *Shin*, *Dalet* and *Yod* from the consonants which

form the names of the letters that compose the word *Shadday*, we get a number that corresponds to *Sar* (*שָׁר*, prince). The numerical value of *Alef* and *Lamed* corresponds to that of *Panim* (*פָנִים*, face). If we join them all, we get *Metatron sar ha-panim* (*מַטְתָּרוֹן שָׁר הַפָּנִים*, Metatron prince of the face), whose initials yield Moses, but when reversed *ha-Shem* (*הַשֵּׁם*, the Name). Thus, it is said (Exodus 6:3): “And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob as *EI Shaddai*. But I was not known to them by the name *IHWH*”. This is the terrific mystery: this is the venerable secret that will be known only by him who knows the secret of the venerable and terrific name *YHVH*, whose numerical value corresponds to the initial and final letter of *Ha-adam* (*הָאָדָם*, l'uomo) [*הָאָדָם* = *יְהֹוָה אָדָם* = 45]. This is an inverted tree whose top is the holy name, set up in the third of the twelve combinations, inverted. Of them He said (Exodus 3:15): “This is My name (*Shem*) forever, and this is My title from generation to generation”. They contain thirty names, whose secret is the sign of blood, that blood of which we said it includes two types of blood, marked in the name of names. The first one is called “hidden mixture that contains the blood”, about which I already spoke above. The secret of Aries and Libra with the secret of the Name divided in two: the first part [*ה* = 15], to the square, makes two-hundred-twenty-five, while raising to the square the second one [*וָה* = 11] we get one-hundred-twenty-one. If you sum two-hundred with one-hundred, you get three-hundred (*Shin*). If you sum twenty with twenty you get forty (*Mem*). If you sum five with one you will get six (*Waw*): *Shemo* (*שְׁמוֹ*, His name). The secret that arises is (Exodus 15:3): “The Lord is a warrior; *YHWH* is His name (*שְׁמוֹ*, *Shemo*)”. Try to understand also this.

12. Those are the wonders of *Kabbalah* that rise to the rank of the intelligible, and in this case also our intellect testifies their truthfulness. There is no higher value. Indeed, do we need to be surprised that the prophets who prophesied through the mouth of God recognized this?

I will now say again that, since the letters are composed of matter and form, the terms are composed by letters and the topics are composed by terms; it necessarily follows that they show us reality in its whole. This notion is found in three worlds: the first one is found in writing composed by letters laid together; the second one is found in speech, the story formulated in expressions composed by enunciated letters; the third one is found in calculation, formulated in the hearts through the thought, conceived by the thought letters. Those three genders, which change through letters, are similar in their changing to the three worlds.

The external gender is separate from every human body. It is the perception of what appears to the eyes, and it corresponds to the material world which is subject to generation and corruption. It is produced by the strengths of what moves it and it destroys by itself according to its own nature. Indeed, as the hand and the quill are the close causes to the letters' reality, and as the eyes take care to give form to their matter, the tongue/language (*לשון*) expresses them when they exist, and the heart imagines them within and then gives form to the outside. In the same way are the sphere and the stars are the close causes to the existence of the first matter that corresponds to the matter of letters, i.e. the ink. The forces of the spheres and the constellations correspond to the eyes instead, which take care of the attribution of the form to the lower matter. The heavenly government is then similar to the tongue/language (*לשון*) which governs, orders and sets up

the structures and the organization of the reality as it is fit, at the time of the attribution of the fundamental characteristics to their matter. Finally, the divine intellect is comparable to the heart that makes everything subsist; it is interior and shapes all forms inside, while it discloses its works outside.

The middle gender — that depends on the higher world of the body of man, which is the head from the side of the face — is the perception of hearing, which corresponds to the middle world of the spheres. This one lives forever by virtue of its intellectual form, even though its intelligence has a limit, for what sustains its form is outside its understanding; about this, scholars believe that it is neither generated nor corrupted.

When you will have meticulously deepened the secret of every expression that man pronounces with the lips, and with the other four points of the mouth which are set forth by tradition, you will find that their characteristics are similar and equivalent to those of the eighth world, both in general and in most part of the particulars. There are many details about which one may talk at length, for it is incalculably more that remains hidden compared to what is revealed to us: we think we know a lot about, but it is nothing but a drop in the ocean. However, it is quite unavoidable given its nature, for (Isaiah 40:28) “unfathomable is understanding”.

The third gender, [which is] internal, is all spiritual and it is unperceivable: it corresponds to the higher world, about which it is not fit to speak here. What we know about it is transmitted only face to face, only to chosen people, i.e. to the (Joel 2:32) “remnant whom the Lord shall call”.

Actually, the world as reality in its entirety is to the blessed Name as the notions of writing, calculation and speech are to the separate acting intellect, which expands its good over man and lets it pass from power into action, where heart corresponds to intellect, tongue/language (לשון) to intelligence and writing to the object of intelligence. The low world is the object of intelligence, the middle one the intelligence and the higher one the intellect. However, the last one is intellect, intelligence and object of the intelligence, the middle one is intelligence and object of intelligence, the lower one only object of intelligence.

When a man passes sometimes by virtue of his intellect from power into action, he will be called able to understand his own intelligible things, and he will correspond to the middle world. When he definitely passes from power into action, without break — something that cannot happen except after the separation from this world, i.e. during the passing away and the resurrection of the *Nefesh* — he will be called intelligent intellect in perpetual action, and he will correspond to the acting intellect separated from every matter and from every substratum, which will let him pass from power into complete action. By the worth of wisdom he will live after death.

Therefore, letters have for man a threefold aspect: they are accessible tools, which through combinations let the *Nefesh* pass into action with greater ease than other tools.

According to writing, their road is combination, permutation and weighing with all that follows in the secret of *Kabbalah*.

According to calculation, it is computation and completion of the letters according to their number and according to the computation that necessarily derives from

the names of their genders and from the peculiarities of the genders contained in every letter that forms them. This method is expressed through the knowledge of composition and separation among different forms, and through the determination of the information transmitted through the names that show the hidden realities according to the hidden letters, and according to the permutations of the indications given by the names themselves, which are formed by the calculated letters. Examples are the four-lettered Name and its interpretations, the twelve-lettered Name and its interpretations, the forty-two-lettered Name and its interpretations; to this one alludes the Rabbi in the *Guide*, book one, chapter sixty-two, when he says that the knowledge of this name leads to the active intellect, in addition to all that he writes about it before and after that passage.

In the second part of the work (*Guide* 2:43), concerning prophecy, he refers in fact to the secret of combination, concerning the permutation of the root *Bachal* (בְּחַל, to despise) with the root *Chaval* (חֲבָל, to damage). And if he, blessed be his memory, does not mention the seventy-two-lettered Name, we come then to what another man of the Lord revealed — he [was] also a Moses, servant of God — in its comment to the *Torah*, him who fights the battles of the Lord, Nahmanides, Maimonide's mate, both disciples of the descendant of Amram, all three universal principles, peace be upon them.

Nahmanides says at the beginning of his book: "Moreover, we have a truthful tradition, according to which the whole *Torah* consists entirely in names of the Holy One, blessed be He". He, blessed be his memory, explains to us the secret of what this fearful topic is, and the truthfulness of what it says with clear demonstrations, for

which no kabbalistic intelligence shall have to endeavor any more. It is not up to me to repeat here what he, peace be upon him, already openly remembered.

And then according to speech: we have to work to melt all languages in the holy language, so that every word the speaker says with the mouth and with the lips is as a mixture of letters of holiness [the twenty-two letters]. You turn them and turn them again until, insisting to turn and turn over by every side, a sort of milk comes out from them; and from this one [comes out] that beaten thing which is called butter. Therefore, if butter can be drawn from milk and nectar from honey (Job 31:40), "thorns come forth instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley"; (Proverbs 30:33) "the wringing of the nose brings forth blood; so the forcing of wrath brings forth fighting". Who combines should not fear, for (Job 28:1) "surely there is a mine for the silver". He should mind what was said (Proverbs 17:3): "The refining pot [**מַצְרָף**, *Matzref*, derives from the root **צְרַף**, *Tzaraf*, to combine] is for silver, and the furnace for gold, but the Lord tries the hearts"; and it is also said (Psalms 119:140): "Combined (**צְרוּפָה**) is your word; therefore Your servant loves it". And it is also said, in the form of a hidden secret and alluding to this and to what follows (Deuteronomy 13:3): "For the Lord is testing you". Therefore, man is composed of two connected primary instincts; at their origin are the father and the mother, which correspond to matter and form. How can one thought be unique without duality? Only His thought embodies yes and no.

Know it and appraise what is left to add to what we recalled; [this] in order to allow the neophyte kabbalist to penetrate the recess of wisdom, even if he did not yet see the capital, so much less the walls, so much less the palace,

so much less the court, so much less its palace and obviously the face of the king; and to a greater extent he is far from His word [*Guide*, 3:51], if he does not adopt the progression fit for this marvelous road.

13. Because of research and experience, I know that everything I learned from the prophetic books, according to the literal meaning, in the interpretation, in the parables of stories and narrative commentaries, what I learned from the *Talmud* and, as if it were not enough, what I learned from the books of philosophy and what I drew from the study of the *Guide*, what the secret of the names transmitted to me, written in the Chapters of Rabbi Yishma'el [*Hekalot Rabbati*], in the Alphabet of Rabbi Aqiva, in the Book of Secrets [*Sefer ha-Razim*], in the Book of Razi'el [*Sefer Razi'el*], in the Book of the Higher and Lower Guardians [probably part of *Sefer ha-Razim*], in the Book of Enlightenment [*Sefer ha-Bahir*] and in the same Book of Formation [*Sefer Yetzirah*], well, none of this could at all bring me to the understanding of the acting intellect until I had garnished myself with prophecy; with it I adorned myself to perform what is said (Jeremiah 9:24), "but who glories in this", until I could be acknowledged to receive the intuition in action. Indeed, to the exclusive kabbalistic method of knowledge of the Name I devoted my life. Nevertheless, the obstacles and the hindrances on the road of *Hiddodet* (**הַתְּבוֹדֵדָה**, isolation) were so insurmountable that the *Ruach ha-Kodesh* in action left me. Today I have only the strength to praise Him Who is worthy of the true praise, for He did not make me woman nor did He make me gentile. (Psalms 146:8) "The Lord opens the eyes of the blind, raises those who are bowed down", (Psalms 146:7) "The Lord lets the prisoners loose", (Psalms 132:4) "He lets sleep go away from my eyes, and

slumber from my eyelids". Praised be Him, glorified be His memory, exalted be His Name over anything.

14. I already wrote to you and to your peers, some matters about certain topics of *Kabbalah*, concerning the fact that it is the only wisdom that leads to *Ruach Ha-Kodesh* and that it is not possible for another wisdom whatsoever to reach it, and that there is therefore a great difference between the experts of prophetic *Kabbalah* and all the other scholars, concerning the degree of understanding of divine matters. Surely, both the former and the latter aim to find truth; they have in common the search, but they differ about the degree they reach. Therefore, if you assess in what they differ and what they have in common, your interest will be aroused by the most venerable (Job 5:27): "Behold this: we have investigated it; it is so. Hear it".

Therefore, know and ponder what you are proud to know, i.e. the knowledge of the Name. Did you know it from the Book of the Name by the knowledgeable Rabbi Avraham ibn Ezra, blessed be his memory, or did you receive it orally from some kabbalist, or did you understand it by yourself from what you learned in philosophy? Did you learn it by one of those roads, by more than one of them or by still another one? Say it to me in writing or by voice. Was I not perhaps right when I spoke about the amazement and the surprise aroused in myself, seeing that you despise the road that every kabbalist knows and recognizes as praiseworthy and higher? Since it leads to the true knowledge that you mention, how can you deny its truth?

Therefore, know that I will have no consideration toward you, neither toward any of the wise in the world who denies the truthful road; rather, I tell you and I clearly

repeat to you that concerning this knowledge I judge you a novice or one who misunderstands or who ensnares, who leads astray or who errs, or who makes fun of *Kabbalah*. Considering that your words are ambiguous, I am forced to judge you in one of these directions: for the way you end shows in fact the way you start, and the Lord knows that what I said concerning you is not to condemn you with intolerance, but to bring you to full reformation.

Thus, my brother (Shabbat 156b), "Leave your astrology" and engage in the philosophical wisdom, when you will have grown tired of the traditions about which we spoke above, if you want to proceed and acquire the art of cooking, after you are already trained in that of seasoning, that you may avail yourself of it and know how to prepare some dainties, for thus said the Rabbi: "He had some ingredients, he seasoned them, cooked them, he made dainties out of them".

15. Know that before knowing the secret of the roads of *Kabbalah*, I thought that there was no higher wisdom other than philosophy, and in fact there is nothing better in its continuous search for the secret roads of our *Torah*. But after receiving the wisdom of *Kabbalah*, which easily leads to understanding, I know that one is lady and the other is handmaid. Then, I understood the serious mistake in which some incur, in known lands — I do not want however make public their shame — when they proclaim themselves openly according to *Kabbalah* "Masters of the Names". Their mistake is that they think they are able to do prodigies by virtue of the Names, with the adjuration, pronouncing them aloud but without any knowledge or competence concerning their meaning. They claim they flutter in the air above the nests, they kill their enemies by words, they extinguish fire and they appease the stormy

sea with the Name, and so on, with those fanciful follies, so much that they become deceptively convinced that by those vain adjurations a married woman can be forced to come to their bed in the heart of the night, as if she should become crazy. Some of them boast they already tried it and succeeded.

In their books they write about those experiments, and when they want to keep the thing hidden and to deceive the fools, they perform some combination. Instead of *Ahavah* (אהבה, love), they write *Habhal* (הבהאל) and instead of *Sinah* (שנאה, hate) they write *Hanshal* (הנשאל), thus confusing some of their nonsense.

It is better that the perfect man who seeks truth does not listen to such and similar things, to a greater extent that he does not trust them, to a greater extent that he does not even seek their knowledge or that he does not investigate them to ascertain whether they be true or false: indeed, they are from the beginning falsehoods and lies, things extraneous to the wise people and to those who seek wisdom and who attain prophecy.

It is evident to the perfect, genuinely higher people, that the authentic knowledge of the Names is the counterpart of the reality of the Name. It expresses the special providence reserved to the wise people, according to their degree, and to the right devotees, according to their devotion to the Name and their ability to draw near Him, blessed be He, besides the other things that are between God and us, since this is the right road in which we should believe and which we should know.

16. What should I still say to speak at length? I had no other intention but to give answer to your writing that testified of your great wisdom. Therefore, be it enough

what I showed you on the subject to help you to strengthen the gasp of your mind toward the striving for the intellection, on a new road.

Although I already composed twenty-six books on this wisdom and twenty-two on prophecy, here it can be enough. All this is in your honor and the honor of the Rabbi with the whole community: I confide in the blessed Name that I will bring peace between you. For this reason I took the effort to write these words and now and then to recall the words of our holy masters, blessed be their memory. However, I am not a censor, but a prompter, and even if I am not even worthy of this part, nor to a greater extent of the other one, I confide in your great humility and in the strength of your doctrine, that you might forgive me for what I said and for what I am about to say.

I heard speaking of you very well. Therefore, I am aware that you know what I quoted and what is found in the *Gemara* for *Shabbat* — which is a book full of pearls of priceless value — at the chapter titled “In what a woman...”, about the subject of the relationships that should occur between two wise persons, according to the higher roads and according to the verses that are interpreted there by our masters, blessed be their memory (*Shabbat* 63a): “Rabbi Yirmeyah said, in the name of Rabbi Eleazar: when two scholars compete in the study of *Halakah*, the Holy One, blessed be He, lets them succeed, as it is said (*Psalms* 45:4): ‘And ride prosperously in your majesty (והדרך, *Wa-hadareka*)’. They also rise to greatness, for it is said, ‘ride’. We might think that this result is achieved even if the study is not done in the exclusive name of the *Torah*. To chase away this doubt it is said (*ibid.*): ‘Because of truth’. We could think that it might be possible even if we get angry. For this reason the biblical

text states (*ibid.*): ‘and meekness and righteousness’. If we stick to this behavior, we deserve the *Torah*, which was given with the right [hand], as it is said (*ibid.*): ‘Your right hand shall teach you fearful things’. Rav Nachman bar Yitzchaq said: let us conquer the things that are said to be at the right of the *Torah*. Indeed, Rabba bar Rav Shila sustained, in the name of Rav Chisda (others state that it was Rabbi Yosef bar Chama who said it instead, in the name of Rabbi Sheshet): what does the passage mean (Proverbs 3:16), ‘length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand, riches and honor’? Does ‘Length of days [...] in her right hand’ perhaps mean wealth and honor, instead of wealth of days? [...] Rabbi Yirmeyah said, in the name of Rabbi Shimeon ben Laqish: when two scholars [are polite each to the other in their debate about the *Halakah*, the Holy One, blessed be He, pays attention to them], as it is said (Malachi 3:16), ‘Then those fearing the Lord spoke together [...] a book of remembrance’. ‘To say’ is used here meaning ‘to speak with courtesy’. What does it mean (*ibid.*), ‘and for those who thought upon His name’? [Rabbi Ammi said: even if we think] to perform a precept, without performing it materially, [the Writing counts it as earned, as if we actually put it into practice...]. Rabbi Abba said again, in the name of Rabbi Shimeon ben Laqish: when two scholars listen to each other during the study of the *Halakah*, [the Holy One, blessed be He, listens to their voice, as it is said (Song of Solomon 8:13),] ‘you who dwell in the gardens’. However, if they do not behave in such a way, they let the *Shekinah* forsake Israel, as it is said (Song of Solomon 8:14), ‘flee, my beloved’. Rabbi Abba said again, in the name of Rabbi Shimeon ben Laqish: even if two scholars go astray from each other in the study of the *Halakah*, the Holy One, blessed be He, loves them anyway, as it is said (Song of Solomon 2:4), ‘and His

banner over me is love’. Therefore, we should not read ‘His banner’ (דִגָלו, *Diglo*), but ‘His deception’ (דִילוֹגו, *Dilugo*). Rava said: after all, they know roughly the handed down norm and there is nobody greater than them through which to settle the topic [...]. Rabbi Abba said again, in the name of Rabbi Shimeon ben Laqish: even if a scholar would be a snake, tie him around your hips. Even if an ignorant person would be pious, do not be his neighbor”.

These are the invaluable pearls which testify to the perfection and about the high degree of their saying. Other matters such as these are found in all their books and also in an entire essay where the different degrees of value appear together: it is the essay of *Avot*, where it is also spoken of many levels of intellectual virtue, where it is said (*Avot* 1:12), “be the disciple of Aaron, loving peace and pursuing it, loving creatures and bringing them near to the *Torah*”, while it is written (*Psalms* 119:165), “Great peace is to those who love Your *Torah*, and there is no stumbling block for them”, and also (*Psalms* 29:11) “The Lord will give strength to His people; the Lord will bless His people with peace”. This is the virtue of the just one, of the wise people and of the devotees, while concerning the contrary it is said (*Isaiah* 48:22): “There is no peace, says the Lord, to the wicked”. And together with the attribute of the honest ones comes the peace, as it is said (*Isaiah* 57:19): “Peace, to him far off, and to him near”. It is moreover said at the end of the priestly benediction (*Numbers* 6:26), “the Lord lift up His face to you and give you peace”, for “peace” is the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, as it is said (*Judges* 6:24): “And he called ‘the Lord is peace’”. In the essay *Avot* is said (*Avot* 1:18): “On three things the world leans: on justice, on truth and on peace”. Those were the attributes of the fathers, the attributes of the wise people and of all the prophets, the attributes of the

supernal beings, as it is said (Job 25:2): "He makes peace in His high places". We should always pursue such an attribute, stick to it, run away from its contrary, even if it is said (Ecclesiastes 3: 8): "A time of war, and a time of peace"; but it is also said (1 Chronicles 12:18), "peace, peace be on you, and peace on your helpers. For your God has helped you", and (1 Samuel 25:6) "And you shall say this to my brother, 'long life and peace be to you, and peace to your house, and peace to all that you have'".

17. What is it useful for the study to him who does not first correct his own attributes? Attributes which are the foundations of the government of the *Nefesh*, since the intellect cannot abide in an ugly palace, where attributes are disproportionate. We know that the right attributes are the abode of the intellectual thought, and the perfect and truthful thought is the palace of the intellect, where there is a coming and going equal to (Ezekiel 1:14) "they kept running and returning", and (1 Samuel 7:17) "his return was to Ramah, for his house was there".

Now, I add to what I already wrote something particular, which contains many implications. I will set it as a seal to my whole letter.

It is well known that the name that seals the redemption is (Exodus 3:14) *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh* (אֶהָיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהָיֶה, I am that I am).

Blessed and exalted be the name of the king of the kings of the kings, the Holy One, blessed be He, Who let us know the secret of His venerable and fearsome Name, so that the priests who are at the head of the chosen tribe among all others bless us with it. He revealed to us the mystery, as it is said (Numbers 6:27), "And they shall put My Name upon the sons of Israel. And I will bless them",

and He taught us the benediction, His truthfulness, His essence, His quantity, His quality, His patrimonies, His laws, His mentions and His parts, that it may be pronounced in the sanctuary with the Name of twelve letters in the same way it is written, and in the rest of the country with its appellatives. Therefore, *Birkat kohanim* ברכת כהנים corresponds to *Middat ha-rachamim* מדת הרחמים (attribute of mercy). It summarizes its genders and it seems to have scattered the created forces that are the forces of the compounds of matter; therefore, this is the wonderful knowledge of the roots that are the arcane of the world. And the perfect kabbalist, for the same sake of honoring the glory of his Factor, must keep them hidden and conceal them before him who is not worthy to know them. It is the Name of forty-two letters that reveals this.

Then, the number which corresponds to the letters of *Birkat kohanim* is sixty, fifteen are the words in which the secret of the threefold benediction is revealed: three times (Numbers 6:23) "Koh tevareku כֹּה תִבְרָכו, in this way you shall bless) [כֹּה, Koh = 25]", whose double it is fifty, so that to make up the secret of *Kohen* כהן (priest = 75). In the same way, the secret of (ibid.) "Emor lahem אמר לָהֶם, saying to them) [להם, Lahem = 75]" is *Kohen*. Therefore, the calculation of the letters of the first verse of the benediction (Numbers 6:24) is fifteen ה, Yah, of the second (Numbers 6:25) is twenty ה, Hyah, of the third (Numbers 6:26) is twenty-five י, Yehi. The verse of twenty is therefore the middle one: it has five letters more than the first one, which has fifteen, and five less than the third one, which has twenty-five. Behold, this secret is the sign of the Names, considered according to the omissions and the additions.

This is the most elevated road there is. And if you say, "So, this way turns good into evil and the lie into truth", and vice versa, know that this is the intent of the attributes. The thought that says yes is the attribute of compassion, the one that says no is the attribute of rigor. The one that prevails among them will subsist. It is about what is located at half in the reading of the *Shema*, among the two holy Names, although the same *Shema* concludes with the word *Echad* (אחד, one = 13), which equals the half of the numerical value of the Name (יהוה = 26). In the same way, the secret of *Asher* (אשר, that), which is among the two Names, shows the angels placed between the two first existences, which are one single thing. Only, the numerical value of the three terms [*Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*] is twenty-one (א"ה, *Ak*), five-hundred-one (ב"ה, *Ak*) and twenty-one (א"ה, *Ak*). You have to understand and examine all this with utmost attention.

This is the secret of the Name of twelve letters, *YH YH YH WH WH WH* (י"ה י"ה ו"ה ו"ה ו"ה), reversed, combined, pointed and accented, with its threefold breathing. This is the beginning and the end of the name of forty-two letters: *ABG YThTz ShQW TzYTh* (א"ב"ג ית"ץ ש"ק ו"צ"ת). This is the beginning, the half and the end of the Name of seventy-two letters, expressed from the beginning to the end: *MWMANY WHWMND* (מו"מ אן"י ו"הו"ן ח"נ"ד).

Know for sure that the attributes turn into the well known extremes, without change or permutation, according to the government of the creatures, and the change is in what suffers the action, not in what acts, in a necessary manner on reality.

This was the function of the seal: to turn over the attributes which are found among you, to pass from war to peace toward a single intellectual and kabbalistic vocation. Therefore, have the goodness to show this short work to the famous Rabbi, whose name in *Gimatreya* corresponds to *Chakam* (חכ"ם, wise), and after him to whom you know to be worthy of it, so that whoever sees it will profit and the clever will enjoy it. All this because of peace (Psalms 37:37): "Mark the blameless man, and observe the upright; for the future of that man is peace". (Psalms 37:11) "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace."